



TESTIMONY FOR HB0508 Children - Labor Trafficking

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Embry

Committee: Judiciary

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0508 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state with well over 30,000 members.

HB0508 expands the application of the Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking - Safe Harbor and Service Response enacted in 2023 to include labor trafficking. It also adds a provision that limits the child being placed back with the offending parent or guardian.

Labor trafficking is an insidious form of human trafficking where victims – in this case, children – are forced to work or provide a service through the use of violence, deception, or coercion by their most trusted adult. Labor trafficking is a serious violation of human rights, regardless of the age of the victim. Children who are victims of labor trafficking often do not only have the horror of what has happened to them to contend with – they may be arrested and charged with delinquency or another criminal offence.

This bill will require that an officer who detains or arrests a child who that officer suspects is a victim of such trafficking must notify a regional navigator so that the navigator can release the child to a trusted care giver and get the services they need.

This is a much more humane way to treat a child who has already been traumatized

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.